

Ruth 2:19-23 - Recognizing God's Goodness a study for the College and Career/
Young Families Sunday School class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church by Steve Thomas
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Introduction

Naomi receives word that Boaz has shown kindness to Ruth. This act of kindness rekindles Naomi's faith in a loving God. Destitute of all hope, Naomi had gone from pleasant to bitter. She saw no hope for her family upon her return to Bethlehem. Ruth's diligence, followed by Boaz's kindness reminded Naomi that God had not forgotten her and her family.

Naomi's gratefulness

When Ruth returned from her work, Naomi peppered her with questions to see how the day went (2:19). She hoped that someone recognized her and was kind to her. The phrase "did take knowledge" could be translated "recognize". The fact that Ruth was gone for the whole day, revealed that something had happened and Naomi was grateful that someone had given her an opportunity to work.

Ruth revealed that the kind person was Boaz. For Naomi, this was a gamechanger. Ruth had returned with sustenance, quite a bit for one day's labor. This was not common for a gleaner to receive such a bounty from one day's labor. There was enough grain for them to be fed for some time and it relieved the urgency of their situation. Naomi was pleasantly surprised at their change of fortunes.

The Goodness of God

Naomi recognizes that God has not withdrawn his goodness from them, both the living and the dead (2:20). She begins to see that God has a divine plan and she appreciated the goodness to her husband and sons, whose possession might now be restored.

It was the kindness of Boaz that restored Naomi's faith. We often do not see the consequences of our actions towards others, both the positive and the negative. If you had to think through your interactions with others this past week, could your actions have restored someone's faith in God? Possibly they did the opposite.

Future plans

Ruth told Naomi of Boaz's offer to remain with them for the remainder of the season (2:21). The ephah of barley that Ruth brought home that day was enough to last them a few weeks. It was equivalent to about a half a month's wages. It is significant that it was roughly one bushel of barley, enough for one person to carry. Boaz had Ruth take as much as she could carry after one day's labor. This is the level of his kindness to her and to Naomi. For Ruth to now be able to work the remainder of the season would take care of them for the remainder of the year. This kindness of Boaz would take care of them for the foreseeable future.

Naomi stated that it was good for her to be with Boaz's crew, because it would keep her safe. The phrase "meet thee not in any other field" means that in Boaz's field, no one would fall on her with hostility (2:22). Naomi continued to care for Ruth's safety. She is not trying to expose Ruth to harm in order for them to survive, but is giving her good counsel.

Barley harvest lasted for two months. The gleanings that Ruth was bringing home would amount to a year's wages for the family, if Boaz's kindness continued. This was the best hope for their family. Ruth remained with the young maidens of Boaz (2:23). She continued to labor dilligently in the fields, providing for her family. She was able to do so because of God's provision, and Boaz's kindness.

Faith Comparison

Naomi's faith was restored at this point, but it took positive circumstances to allow this to happen. Compare Job's comments at his lowest (Job 1:21-22; 2:10). We have discussed already the faith of Moses, and of the Hebrew children who faced worse than Naomi but remained steadfast in their faith towards God. Sometimes a believer's faith does need a boost, as Naomi received from Boaz. But a lack of faith will put the believer through needless anxiety and grief. The believer has a "front row seat" to watch God work, and to waste this time with complaining and fear of what might occur would be to miss out on the anticipation and excitement of what God will do.

Conclusion

Ruth's commitment to Naomi along with her hard work and Boaz's kindness to this poor family was used to restore a woman's faith. Naomi had begun to see God's hand in their lives again. God's care of them had never waned, it just was not as clearly seen as it had been previously. Just because we cannot see God working in our lives, does not mean that He is not working things out for our good and for His own glory (Rom 8:28). This working is according to His purpose, a reminder that we often forget.